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AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN TEACHING CITIZENSHIP

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Experiences growing out of the war have brought to the attention of thoughtful people, more vividly than ever before, the necessity for definite training in citizenship. The feeling is constantly growing that only through the development of good citizenship will come the wise solution of the problems at the root of the ever-growing, widespread social unrest.

Good citizenship is the product of proper knowledge, right ideals, and correct habits. It consists of being able and desirous of playing one's full part in the co-operative activities of one's community, state, and nation. Obviously an education for such citizenship must aim at creating social intelligence in citizens, on the one hand, and at increasing co-operation to a maximum, on the other hand. Recognizing the increased emphasis that is being placed upon the public school as the agency best fitted for teaching citizenship, the North Central Association through its Commission on Secondary Schools recently made a special study of the high schools in its territory for the purpose of securing data as to the practices in the various schools with respect to the three following aspects of training for citizenship:

- a) Provisions for arousing desirable sentiments of citizenship.
- b) Provision for furnishing information relating to the privileges and duties of citizenship.
- c) Provision for securing from pupils active participation in affairs that tend to develop habits of spontaneous, and also studied, responses that make for good citizenship.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the plan in operation in Devils Lake High School whereby provision is made for training in leadership and practice afforded for perfecting habits of citizenship. The plan is an outgrowth of the belief that adequate results in the teaching of citizenship in a democracy can be fully realized

only through the creation of a democratic environment in the public school where pupils and teachers co-operate in solving school problems—"where the inspiration and social pressure of student upon student will parallel and supplement the work of the teacher."

The Devils Lake High School Students' Association is in no sense a scheme for student self-government in the commonly accepted meaning of that term. It provides for student-faculty co-operation in the administration of extra-curricular activities and in the solution of school problems. Its object is to develop true social consciousness, and to emphasize the importance of co-operation to the end that good citizenship may be realized. All the various school organizations—athletic association, literary societies, school paper, musical organizations, etc.—are centered in and directed by the Students' Association. The work of the association is handled primarily by "boards." No plan devised by any board is put into execution except upon the approval of the faculty adviser of that board.

The executive board is known as the Booster Board. In its organization a definite attempt is made to foster leadership based upon real ability. The writer maintains that a fundamental weakness in current practice in training for citizenship is that the rôle of leadership is not properly emphasized. No special provision is made for the training in leadership of the talented pupil. It no more follows that superior ability guarantees leadership than that leadership is proof positive of superior talent. Many a potential leader of superior talent is a worker in the ranks simply because he lacked opportunity for training in leadership. On the other hand, in the rank of leaders may be found the leader with only mediocre ability simply because favorable circumstances have trained him for leadership. Both society and school are equally open to the indictment that the individual of superior talents is not properly recognized and his achievements are not adequately rewarded.

As educators, we must frankly face the fact that both in a democracy and in an autocracy the rulers are a group of leaders, the point of difference being that in the former the leaders are directly responsible to the people. In either case the type of leader—shaped by his ability, ideals, and standards—is a dominant

factor in determining the type of government. Having its roots in the half-truth that all men are created equal, and nourished by doctrines of socialism, the notion that leaders are superfluous is widely held by certain classes of citizens.

To correct this impression; to emphasize the necessity for real leadership based on ability; to teach the importance of choosing wisely talented leaders imbued with the ideal of service; to teach that the best citizen is the one who renders the best service to his fellows; to foster sentiments of loyalty, fair play, and social responsibility; and to provide *training in leadership and afford practice in perfecting habits of citizenship* should be the function of any comprehensive scheme to teach well the business of being a good citizen.

The attempt to recognize the rôle of leadership in training for citizenship is the unique feature of the Devils Lake High School Students' Association; it is this that differentiates it from various other students' associations organized to secure the participation of pupils in school affairs. Largely through the executive board, the heart of the association, the following functions of the organization are realized: to unify the various student activities; to promote and foster democratic pupil-participation in school affairs; to develop loyalty and proper school spirit; and in every way to equip students for the duties of future citizenship. The Booster Board co-operates with the following boards, chairmen of which it elects from its own membership:

a) Finance Board. Membership: Four class treasurers, Students' Association treasurer, and the treasurers of the athletic, social, and literary boards. Also, commercial instructor and faculty business manager. Duties: This board exercises supervisory power over all school funds. It draws up and has printed all necessary vouchers needed for the efficient handling of all school money.

b) Athletic Board. Membership: President of Students' Association, treasurer of Students' Association, football manager, basket-ball manager, track manager, manager of girls' athletics, boys' athletic coach, and the president of the athletic association. This board, whose duties are of a general nature, supervises all matters pertaining to athletics in Devils Lake High School.

Literary Board. Membership: The secretary of each literary society, four other members (two elected from each society), two faculty members (appointed by the superintendent of city schools and high-school principal), and the editor-in-chief of the high-school paper. **Duties:** Supervision over all activities of a literary or musical nature. This board is definitely charged with the responsibility of initiating from time to time, as conditions warrant, plans for school plays, operettas, public concerts, declamation contests, and school debates, to the end that the greatest possible number of students may be stimulated to exercise any talents along these lines.

Social Board. Membership: Two members elected from the Senior class, and one from each of the other classes. Faculty adviser appointed by the superintendent of city schools and principal of high school. **Duties:** This board is charged with the responsibility of developing and fostering proper democratic spirit and social life among all of the students. To this end a definite constructive social program is planned. It is also the function of this board to welcome new students, to assist in their adjustment to a new environment, and to acquaint them with the traditions, ideals, and spirit of the school. It is also the special duty of this board to see that pupils who are ill are remembered with courtesies by their schoolmates.

Scholarship Board. Membership: Four class secretaries, one member from each class, selected on basis of highest scholarship for the preceding year, president of the Students' Association, and the high-school principal, adviser. **Duties:** To co-operate in every way with the faculty to raise the standard of scholarship in the school; to co-operate in the enforcement of any rule governing participation in extra-curricular activities. The secretary of each class keeps on file in the principal's office a record of the scholarship standing and the extra-curricular activities of each student in his class; graphs showing the comparative rank in scholarship of each class are prepared each six weeks.

Inasmuch as the Booster Board is the heart of the association, and since it is in certain respects unique, the part of the constitution providing for that board is submitted as follows:

Section 1. The principal or executive board of the association shall be known as the Booster Board.

Sec. 2. Duties:

a) This board is charged with the definite responsibility of creating and fostering the right school spirit and to this end definite campaigns shall be planned.

b) This board shall from time to time call mass meetings to boost for a bigger and better Devils Lake High School.

c) The Booster Board shall elect from its own membership chairmen for all other boards.

d) The Booster Board shall have power to initiate from time to time as conditions warrant certain features of student control, which shall be approved by the Students' Association and the high-school principal.

Sec. 3. Membership: Not to exceed 8 per cent of total high-school enrolment.

a) Members of this board shall be elected by ballot from nominees submitted by the faculty. A ballot shall be prepared containing the names of the candidates, and each member of the Students' Association shall vote for the candidates whom he believes properly qualified for, and worthy of membership on, said Booster Board. A vote for a candidate shall be indicated by an "X" placed after said candidate's name.

b) Two-thirds of the total vote cast shall be required for election, provided, however, a vote of *four-fifths* of the total vote cast shall be required for the election of any candidate whose average scholastic standing is below 85 per cent but not less than 80 per cent; provided further that for any candidate whose average scholastic standing is less than 80 per cent a vote of *nine-tenths* of total votes cast shall be required for election.

Sec. 4. Nominations:

a) Nominations are to be made on the basis of *scholarship* and *leadership* as manifested in extra-curricular activities.

b) No pupil shall be eligible to membership on Booster Board who has not been a student in Devils Lake High School at least one full school year.

c) No pupil shall be eligible for membership on Booster Board who has not maintained for all subjects pursued in high school an average standing of at least 80 per cent; with the exception, however, that a pupil whose average standing is less than 80 per cent, and who has been regularly enrolled in Devils Lake High School two or more years and who has shown *distinct improvement* in scholarship during the current or preceding year, and who has shown *conspicuous* evidence of leadership, *may* be nominated and is eligible for membership on said board.

d) All Juniors, not members of Booster Board, having maintained during the first two and one-half years of the high-school course an average standing of 88 per cent *shall* be nominated for membership on said board.

e) All Sophomores, not members of Booster Board, who have maintained during the first one and one-half years of the high-school course an average standing of 90 per cent *shall* be nominated for membership on said board.

f) Nominations for Booster Board shall be made so as to maintain the percentage of membership of said board, by classes, roughly, as follows: Seniors 40 per cent; Juniors 30 per cent; and Sophomores 30 per cent.

Sec. 5. The annual election of Booster Board members shall be held on the third Friday of the last six-weeks period of the school year. Special elections to fill vacancies in the board may be held at any time.

Sec. 6. Vote of confidence: The names of members of the Booster Board shall be presented to the Students' Association at the regular Booster Board election for the vote of confidence or approval. Any member who receives less than two-thirds of total vote cast shall be required to resign immediately.

From the above it is evident that the Booster Board is more than an executive board; it is an honor society. This honor society differs from the traditional honor society which selects from a school, presumably, the ablest members of the group, tags them, banquets them, and then ceases to function, existing for its members and their honor only. The honor society in Devils Lake High School selects the ablest pupils, based on both scholarship and leadership, and provides them opportunity to exercise superior talents in the interests of their school to the end that good citizenship may be developed. It is not an end in itself. It exists not for its members and their honor, but for their school and its honor.

The final measure of the merit of the association is the work performed. Since the organization has been in operation only about one year, final conclusions cannot be drawn. However, its success may be roughly judged by some of its works.

The Finance Board has devised a constructive plan for the handling of all school money from whatever source. The treasurer of the Students' Association is custodian of all funds from various organizations and classes. He keeps a separate account with each class and the various boards, and issues checks only on order of the treasurers authorized by their respective board or classes. All bills except those of the various classes must be approved both by the proper board and by the board's faculty adviser. The necessary order is then made out by the treasurer

of the board, and together with the bill is presented to the Students' Association treasurer, who issues the check which is attested by the high-school principal. The amount paid out is charged to the proper account. The accounts of all treasurers must at all times balance with the books of the Students' Association treasurer.

Money realized through the activities of any organization is paid to the treasurer of the Students' Association and by him credited to the proper board or class. Funds obtained from any function sponsored by the school as a whole without reference to any particular organization are apportioned by the Finance Board to the various boards according to their respective needs.

The Literary Board is actively interested in increasing the efficiency of the two literary societies; excellent programs are being given every alternate week. Under the direction of this board a high-school paper is published every three weeks. Plans are being made for an operetta and a series of one-act plays.

The Booster Board has done some excellent work, and as a result the spirit of the school is splendid. In the city clean-up campaign last spring this board co-operated with the local Commercial Club by offering prizes in the various grades from the fourth to twelfth for the best essays on "The City Beautiful." Four-minute talks on this subject were made by members of the board in each grade and the high school. During the last semester this board successfully supervised the largest study-hall period of the day. At the present time a series of programs is sponsored by this board for fostering the right school spirit. A program is planned on each of the following subjects: (1) the spirit of enthusiasm, (2) the spirit of optimism, (3) the spirit of courtesy, (4) the spirit of co-operation, (5) the spirit of toleration, (6) the spirit of fair play, (7) the spirit of honesty, (8) the spirit of industry, (9) the spirit of perseverance—determination, (10) the spirit of loyalty, (11) the spirit of success.

The students are enthusiastic over the association, and under the stimulus afforded assume their full share of responsibility in solving school problems. The spirit is fine because the pupils feel that the school is their own.